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are not located and such that the outgoing TDM signals are not framed. Even though described in terms of not framing the incoming signals, embodiments of the present invention are not so limited. In one embodiment, line card 502 may still frame the incoming signal, but are not required for the subsequently described operations. For example, ingress unit 620 may still frame to ease the processing burden of another network element that receive this data and may require framing of such data.

Please replace paragraph 81 on page 27, with the following rewritten paragraph:

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[0081] For example, embodiments of the present invention illustrated with Figures 7 and 8 were described with regard to a DS1 superframe. However, embodiments of the present invention are not so limited, as other transmission standards can be employed. For example, the E1 standard could be used. Therefore, the overhead bits illustrated in Figures 7 and 8 would become overhead bytes. In one such embodiment, the overhead bytes would be included within the payload of the signal.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 8, and 21 and add new claims 39-46 as follows: